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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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THE LATER MEDIAEVAL AGES

A small selection of objects from the Royal Ontario Museum's Mediaeval European collection, grouped round the series of photographs illustrating Mediaeval Life appearing recently in Life magazine, constitutes the interesting exhibition "The Later Mediaeval Ages" which will remain in the Special Exhibition Gallery until April 12th. The design has been to bring the photographs into focus by exhibiting with them the sort of object they themselves depict. Sculpture is illustrated by a fine Spanish XIIth century wooden Madonna and Child from Barcelona, and a French painted stone Madonna and Child from Lorraine, belonging to the second half of the fourteenth century. There is also a Flemsh oak Reredos, dating from the late XVth century, carved with scenes from the Life of Christ and of the Virgin. From the Museum's Arms and Armour collection have been selected a complete suit of armour of the early sixteenth century, and cases illustrating the development of the sword and of other arms; these are supplemented by a small oak figure of a Knight in Armour, which comes from XVth century Flanders. Other objects are examples of furniture—two Italian chairs, and two chests, one German, in iron-bound oak, and a painted Italian Cassone, perhaps from Florence; a case with hand-written and early printed books; a case of English pottery; and examples of alabaster and ivory carving and of velvets.

"FOOL'S GOLD" IS EVERYWHERE

"Fool's Gold" is the name often applied to pyrite, an iron sulphide, pale brassy yellow in color with a metallic lustre and greenish-black streak. When in masses it is often mistaken for gold, but in crystal form pyrite cannot be easily confused with any other mineral. The mineralogy galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum display a number of the crystals. One of the most common of all minerals, pyrite is found in all kinds of rocks, with all kinds of associations, in all parts of the world. It occurs in vast beds, as at Rio Tinto, Spain, or as one of the constituents of ore veins. Colorado, Utah and Pennsylvania are among the best American specimen localities while Italy and the iron mines of the Island of Elba have produced many superb specimens. Pyrite has been mined in large quantities, not as an iron ore, but for the manufacture of sulphuric acid, so important to many of our industries. Because sulphur makes steel brittle and since it is not easily separated from the iron, pyrite is scarcely ever used as an ore for iron. Gold, one of the most important impurities in this sulphide, is often scattered through the pyrite in invisible particles, and sometimes in quantities enough to make it worth while mining pyrite for gold.

TOILE DE JOUY, AN 18th CENTURY FASHION

Of the many types of textile design that have stood the test of time and come down to us from the great periods of decorative art, few are more charming than the 18th century copperplate designs which were so popular for upholstery and draperies at that time. Among the selection from the Harry Wearne Collection of Printed and Painted Textiles now on exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, are beautiful examples of the informal all-over patterns of these fabrics containing groups of figures birds and animals, and graceful sprays of flowers and foliage. Printed in monotone on cotton and linen they are the origin of many of the drapery and wallpaper patterns of today called "toiles de Jouy." Copperplate printing on textiles was first used in the middle of the 18th century in England. In France, the Oberkampf factory at Jouy was one of the first to introduce this new process. One of the most charming designs in the Museum's collection is "The Processes of Manufacture" produced in 1783 to commemorate the Oberkampf factory being made a manufacture Royale, which was the equivalent of our "By appointment to His Majesty." In this are illustrated all the steps ivolved in making printed textiles. It was designed by one of the most talented decorative artists of the period, Jean Baptiste Huet, who had recently joined the factory. The great success of this his first design gained him the position of chief designer for the factory, the position he held until his death in 1811. The Museum has a number of copperplate textiles designed by him. His subjects are mostly pictorial depicting historic, rustic, and romantic incidents or events of current interest. They were the "pieces de resistance" of the Oberkampf factory and those which gained it fame and prestige. Many of them, as well as those produced by other factories in France and England, are still an inspiration to textile designers today.

AMERICAN MAMMALOGISTS MEET AT MUSEUM

The American Society of Mammalogists will be guests of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology when they hold their annual meeting in Toronto on April 12, 13 and 14. This marks the first time, since its formation in 1919, that the Society has met in Canada. Many distinguished mammalogists from all over North America will be present and anyone interested in wildlife is invited to attend the programme of papers, illustrated with movies and slides, to be given in the Museum theatre. Primarily interested in the promotion of the interests of mammalogy, the Society whose membership is world-wide, has published quarterly for over twenty years "The Journal of Mammalogy," a valuable contribution to science. It is actively influential in many wildlife conservation projects. The prong-horned antelope, only big animal peculiar to North America, is the Society's insignia.

GRASSHOPPERS WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS

Butterhoppers" was the name coined on the spot by a bright schoolboy when he examined some curious grasshoppers on display at the Royal Ontario Museum. Obviously they fascinated him. And no wonder—for these 'hoppers from tropical South America, recently acquired by the Museum, had the grim-looking bodies of their kind, but were transformed into things of beauty by their gorgeous butterfly wings. With a spread of about six inches, the wings have a coloration in shades of reddish brown, and dainty as butterfly wings should be. These winged 'hoppers have a formidable scientific label, of course, but "Butterhoppers" suits them perfectly.